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## THREE DANTE NOTES

BY ERNEST HATCH WILKINS

### I. *INFERNO* I, 4 AND VIII, 122

In Guido delle Colonne's canzone beginning "Amor, ke lungamente m' à' menato" occur the lines:

ahi quanto è dura cosa al cor dolente  
star quetamente e non far dimostranza!<sup>1</sup>

Dante knew and liked this poem: he refers to it twice, with approbation, in the *De vulgari eloquentia*.<sup>2</sup> It is then highly probable that Guido's phrase "ahi quanto è dura cosa" was consciously or unconsciously in Dante's mind when he wrote the fourth line of the *Inferno*:

Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars have long differed as to whether the first word of this line should be *ahi* or *e*.<sup>4</sup> The probability that Dante's line is reminiscent of Guido's "ahi quanto è dura cosa" strengthens the opinion that Dante wrote "Ahi quanto" and not "E quanto."

<sup>1</sup> Lines 42-43. I quote from the edition by Monaci, in his *Crestomazia italiana dei primi secoli*, pp. 218-221. For this part of the poem (ll. 20-65) Monaci follows the Giuntina text, which was probably based upon the Palatine MS 418, which now lacks the leaf containing this stanza. Monaci gives also the variants of the Vatican MS 3793, the only MS which preserves this part of the poem. This MS in this case lacks its usual authority, for the poem, no. 305 in the order of the MS, was added by a hand later than that of the original scribe. The reading for line 42 is: "oiquante dura pena al core dolente."

<sup>2</sup> I, xii and II, v.

<sup>3</sup> I quote from Professor Grandgent's edition.

<sup>4</sup> The latest and most extensive discussion is that of Del Lungo and D' Ovidio, published as an appendix to Del Lungo's *Lectura Dantis* for the first canto of the *Inferno*, Florence, Sansoni (1913). The case can hardly be settled until the interrelations of the MSS are established. Del Lungo does not refer to all of the earlier discussions; some of those he does not mention contain good arguments in favor of the *ahi*.

The second stanza of the same canzone closes with the line :

saggio guerrieri vince guerra e prova.<sup>1</sup>

This line, emphatic in its position, was very likely in Dante's mind, consciously or unconsciously, when he assigned to his *famoso saggio* the words (*Inf.* viii, 122) :

Non sbigottir, ch'io vincerò la prova.

## II. PURGATORIO XXVI, 71 ff.

Guido Guinizelli paid filial compliment to Guittone of Arezzo in a sonnet in "difficult" rhyme which opens with the octave :

Charo padre meo, de vostra laude  
non bizogna c'alcun omo s'enbarchi ;  
ch'en vostra mente intrar visio non aude  
che for de sé vostro saver non l'archi.  
a ciascun reo sì la porta claude  
che ssembra più 'n via che Venesia Marchi ;  
entr' a Ghaudenti ben vostr'alma ghaude  
c'al me' parer li ghaldii àn sovr'alarchi.<sup>2</sup>

Guittone replied *per le rime* in a sonnet beginning :

Figliò mio dilettozo, in faccia laude  
non con discrezion sembrami marchi.<sup>3</sup>

In this sonnet the rhymes are homonymous : *marchi* is used, in four different senses, for the four even lines of the octave.<sup>4</sup>

Dante paid filial compliment to Guinizelli in the 26th canto of the *Purgatorio*. The spirit of Guinizelli, as yet unidentified, speaks from the flame, briefly asking the unknown traveler if he be still mortal. Dante tells of the grace that permits his journey in the flesh, and asks in return "Chi siete voi?" The spirits marvel ; then Guinizelli answers :

Ma poi che furon di stupore scarche  
(Lo qual negli alti cor tosto s'attuta),  
' Beato te, che delle nostre marche,'  
Ricominchiò colei che pria m'inchiese,  
' Per morir meglio esperienza imbarche . . . ' (ll. 71-75).

<sup>1</sup> Line 26. The Vatican MS reads "saggio guerrero uincie guerra eproua."

<sup>2</sup> Monaci, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Monaci's glossary, s. v. marchi.

At the end of his speech Guinizelli names himself. Then comes the clause containing Dante's characterization of Guinizelli:

Quand' i' odo nomar sè stesso il padre  
Mio, e degli altri miei miglior, che mai  
Rime d'amore usar dolci e leggiadre (ll. 97-99).

Dante so expresses his emotion that Guinizelli says to him:

'Dimmi che è cagion per che dimostri  
Nel dire e nel guardare avermi caro?' (ll. 110-111).

Later, Guinizelli utters a severe criticism of Guittone. There are men, he says, whose literary likings are fixed without regard to art or reason; such gave an undue preference to Giraut de Bornelh; and other such paid undue honor to Guittone:

'Così fer molti antichi di Guittone,  
Di grido in grido pur lui dando pregio,  
Fin che l'ha vinto il ver con più persone' (ll. 125-127).

The opening rhyme-words in Guinizelli's speech, *marche* and the rare *imbarche*, are virtually identical with the rhyme-words *enbarchi* and *Marchi* in Guinizelli's sonnet. This passage, like that sonnet, is an expression of filial compliment from a younger to an older poet; Guinizelli, complimenter in the sonnet, is complimented here. The agreement in rhyme-words under such circumstances makes it evident that Dante had the sonnet in mind when he wrote this passage; the borrowing of Guinizelli's own rhymes is indeed virtually a reference to the sonnet, and constitutes a compliment in itself. Probably Dante had in mind Guittone's sonnet as well.

This being the case, we may be confident that the opening words of Guinizelli's sonnet, "Charo padre meo," were in Dante's mind when he wrote:

il padre  
Mio, e degli altri miei miglior,

and perhaps when he wrote:

Nel dire e nel guardare avermi caro.

It becomes evident, moreover, that the hostile reference to Guittone here is introduced as a correction of the opinion of Guittone expressed

by Guinizelli in the sonnet. Scorn of Guittone from a Guinizelli gifted with other-world insight is more effective than it could possibly be from other lips!<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Dante felt a certain satisfaction in confirming the deprecatory reproof contained in the first two lines of Guittone's sonnet to Guinizelli.

Dante's interesting treatment of Guinizelli in this case is similar to his procedure in the 20th canto of the *Inferno*, where an account of the founding of Mantua which Dante thought preferable to the account in the *Aeneid* is, as Professor Grandgent says, "courteously put into the mouth of Virgil himself." <sup>2</sup>

### III. SUPPOSED PORTRAITS OF DANTE IN MICHELANGELO'S "LAST JUDGMENT"

In Michelangelo's fresco of the Last Judgment a man is represented as kneeling and leaning forward just behind St. Peter. The face, dark and faint, appears just to the left of St. Peter's right thigh; part of the body is visible between St. Peter's legs; and the left leg of the kneeling figure appears to the right of St. Peter's left leg. The face is in profile, the eye looking slightly upward toward the Christ.

Three English biographers of Michelangelo mention this figure, and report or express the opinion that the head is a portrait of Dante. Harford says:

In advance of the right-hand group is the Baptist, on the left St. Peter and St. Paul, and between their advancing limbs an animated head peeps out, which is said to be that of Dante.<sup>3</sup>

Black says:

Before quitting this part of the picture, it may be proper to refer to the suggestion that the kneeling figure behind St. Peter has been intended to represent Dante. The soiled condition of the fresco is too great to enable a

<sup>1</sup> For Dante's other references to Guittone, see *De vulgari eloquentia* I, xiii and II, vi, and *Purg.* xxiv, 56.

<sup>2</sup> Argument to *Inf.* xx. See also Professor Rand's discussion of the Manto problem in his *Dante and Servius*, in the Thirty-Third Annual Report of this Society, pp. 8-11.

<sup>3</sup> J. S. Harford, *The Life of Michael Angelo Buonarroti*, London, 1858, Vol. II, p. 49.



A DETAIL OF MICHELANGELO'S "LAST JUDGMENT"

distinct examination of the features, of which all that can be said is that they have an intelligent, and, so to speak, portrait-like character, but there is no antecedent improbability in the suggestion. The poet had already been placed in a post of honour in Raphael's Parnassus; the enduring reverence in which he was held by Michael Angelo is well known, and the painter may have gladly indulged his hero-worship by placing the form of Italy's greatest poet in a far higher region than that already allotted to him. The humility of the attitude, and the earnest attempt to gain an imperfect glance at the Divine Brightness sufficiently vindicate the painter from any charge of over-boldness, and Michael Angelo might rejoice that he had within his power a means of testifying his devotion; for this monument at least he had no need to ask, and be refused permission by a worthless master.<sup>1</sup>

Holroyd says :

Dante is there thirsting for deepest mysteries, his face positively thrust between St. Peter and St. Paul.<sup>2</sup>

The engraver Chapon, in his essay on the fresco, asserts that this figure represents St. Mark :

Près de saint Pierre, mais au second rang, saint Paul, l'apôtre et le docteur des nations. Saint Luc, son évangéliste, le suit, tandis que saint Marc se prosterne humblement aux pieds du prince des apôtres.<sup>3</sup>

Thode lists the many identifications proposed by Chapon, and expresses a general disapproval of his method and results.<sup>4</sup> Thode himself regards the group in which the figure in question appears as a "Choir of the Apostles," and in his description refers to this figure as "eine jugendliche knieende Gestalt hinter Petrus." He does not, however, suggest a name for it.<sup>5</sup>

The head is not mentioned in any other study of Michelangelo accessible to me. It is not referred to by Professor Holbrook in his admirable volume on the portraits of Dante;<sup>6</sup> nor, so far as I can ascertain, by any other writer on Dante iconography.

<sup>1</sup> C. C. Black, *Michael Angelo Buonarroti*, London, 1875, pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> C. Holroyd, *Michael Angelo Buonarroti*, London, 1903, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> L.-L. Chapon, *le Jugement dernier de Michel-Ange*, Paris, 1892, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> H. Thode, *Michelangelo*, Vol. II, Berlin, 1908, pp. 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>6</sup> R. T. Holbrook, *Portraits of Dante from Giotto to Raffael*, London, 1911.

It seems to me possible, but hardly probable, that the head is a portrait of Dante.

Two Florentine frescoes offered precedent for the representation of Dante in such a scene as this: Giotto's "Paradise" in the Bargello — still visible in the lifetime of Michelangelo<sup>1</sup> — and Orcagna's "Last Judgment" in Santa Maria Novella. That Michelangelo was familiar with these two works there can be no reasonable doubt. Very probably he returned to them with special interest during his stay in Florence in the summer of 1534: he had already received the commission for the painting of his own "Last Judgment."<sup>2</sup> Within the Vatican itself, moreover, Raphael, in the "Disputa," had introduced Dante in holy company.

Michelangelo did indeed hold Dante in "enduring reverence." That reverence is attested not only in the two famous sonnets, but in Michelangelo's offer — to which the last words quoted from Black refer — to make a suitable monument for the poet, in case the Florentines should be allowed to bring back his exiled bones: "Io Michelagnolo schultore il medesimo a vostra Santità supplico, offerendomi al divin poeta fare la sepultura sua chondecente."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the "Last Judgment" itself was influenced by the *Divine Comedy* — certainly in the figures of Charon and Minos, probably in the prominence of Adam and St. Peter and in the gesture and expression of St. Peter, very possibly in other respects.<sup>4</sup>

There is then abundant reason to expect a representation of Dante in the "Last Judgment."

The head of the figure kneeling behind St. Peter corresponds in its general character to the traditional Dante as represented by painters and sculptors from Orcagna to Raphael: there is the same leanness, the same proportion of the features, the same prominent nose, firm lips, and

<sup>1</sup> See Holbrook, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Steinmann, *Die sixtinische Kapelle*, Munich, 1905, Vol. II, pp. 525-527; Thode, Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Steinmann, Vol. II, p. 561. The petition was signed in 1519.

<sup>4</sup> See W. Kallab, "Die Deutung von Michelangelos Jüngstem Gerichte," in *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Franz Wickhoff gewidmet*, Vienna, 1903, p. 138; Steinmann, Vol. II, pp. 569 ff.; K. Borinski, *Die Rätsel Michelangelos*, Munich, 1908, pp. 291 ff.; Thode, Vol. II, pp. 40-46; A. Farinelli, "Il Giudizio di Michelangelo e l'ispirazione dantesca," in *Scritti varii . . . in onore di Rodolfo Renier*, Turin, 1912, p. 511. Kallab, Steinmann, and Borinski certainly exaggerate the extent of Dante's influence; Thode and Farinelli, I think, err in the other direction.



strong chin. The fact that the head is in profile, too, brings it into accordance with the pictorial practice: the Dante portraits by Orcagna, Filippino Lippi,<sup>1</sup> Signorelli, and Raphael are in profile.

On the other hand, the face has a more youthful character—in the accompanying plate, at least—than one would look for in a post-Raphaelite portrait of Dante, and the treatment of the hair seems peculiar. But the plate is none too clear in either of these respects; other reproductions give a much more Dantesque impression. A study at close range of the painted head itself should settle the matter.

Chapon's assertion that the figure represents St. Mark has no other possible basis than the quite insufficient fact of the figure's proximity, in a humble position, to St. Peter. Thode's theory that the figure represents an apostle requires as premise that all the figures of the group represent apostles. But Thode himself remarks the presence of four women in the group, and it is further to be noted that the position and action of the figure in question differentiate it sharply from the more prominent forms about it.

Two other figures in the fresco have been thought to represent Dante.

Steinmann<sup>2</sup> held that Dante is represented in the figure emerging sleepily from the ground just at the left edge of the fresco. This theory, accepted by Spahn,<sup>3</sup> is rejected by Borinski<sup>4</sup> and Thode,<sup>5</sup> and fairly ridiculed by Farinelli.<sup>6</sup> Steinmann's statement that the figure wears the same Florentine costume and headgear that appear in recognized Dante portraits is quite wrong; the figure wears graveclothes, of the same sort as those worn by several of the neighboring figures.<sup>7</sup>

Borinski<sup>8</sup> held that the scene within Hell-mouth represents Virgil's colloquy with Malacoda, as described in *Inferno* XXI, and that the

<sup>1</sup> See F. J. Mather, Jr., "Dante Portraits," in *The Romanic Review*, Vol. III (1912), pp. 117-118.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, pp. 583-584, 684.

<sup>3</sup> M. Spahn, *Michelangelo und die sixtinische Kapelle*, Berlin, 1907, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 296, 323.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. II, pp. 42, 64.

<sup>6</sup> P. 557.

<sup>7</sup> This is sufficiently clear in Steinmann's own plate of the "Last Judgment," No. LXIV-LXV in the second of the two portfolios published with his work; it is clearer still in Della Casa's engraving of the lower left corner of the fresco, reproduced by Steinmann as plate LXIX in the same portfolio.

<sup>8</sup> P. 323.

kneeling leg barely visible just at the lower left corner of the opening represents Dante in hiding! This theory, too, receives from Farinelli<sup>1</sup> the ridicule it deserves.

I take this opportunity to call attention to a drawing of Dante, in Christ Church Library, attributed by Berenson to the School of Antonio Pollaiuolo. The drawing has not been mentioned, I believe, in any study of the portraits of Dante. It is reproduced as plate XXII in the first volume of Berenson's *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*.<sup>2</sup> It is described thus in his *catalogue raisonné*: "Full-length figure of Dante. Pen and bistre. H. 26 cm., w. 9 cm.";<sup>3</sup> and thus in the text:

In Christ Church Library at Oxford there is a drawing for a Dante showing an open book. It is a charming but feeble copy of a lost Antonio, and the affinity with Castagno's Portraits of Worthies is distinctly felt.<sup>4</sup>

The drawing in the Print Room at Berlin representing the head of a man — probably Dante — with bay leaves in his cap, which is attributed by Krauss<sup>5</sup> to Signorelli, is attributed by Berenson<sup>6</sup> to Piero di Cosimo.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 557-558.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. II, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. I, p. 31. A footnote to the word "Antonio" reads: "The claw-like hands prove this conclusively, although of course the character of the drawing is, in other respects as well, unmistakable."

<sup>5</sup> Ingo Krauss, *Das Portrait Dantes*, Berlin, 1901, pp. 51-52.

<sup>6</sup> Vol. I, pp. 127-128; Vol. II, p. 130.